

**MACHO: THE SINGULARITY OF A MOCK SPANISH ITEM**

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper scrutinizes the path of the semantic extension of the originally neutral Spanish term *macho* ‘male animal’ to the pejorative ‘animal-like man’. Semantic pejoration belongs to one of the techniques that Hill (1995b) identifies when describing Mock Spanish, a type of racist discourse used by monolingual English speakers when using single Spanish words. Prototypically, the author of the semantic change from a positive or neutral to a negative connotation of a Spanish term is the monolingual speaker of American English. This seems not to be the case with respect to *macho*. In the same theoretical vein as Mock Spanish, many voices attribute the semantic pejoration of *macho* to the US-English discourse. The objective of this paper is to identify the origin of this pejoration. Methodologically, this is conducted by means of a lexical search of the oldest pejorated *macho* items in Spanish, and the semantic content of the first *macho* borrowings in English. For this purpose, I consulted different sources, like diachronic corpora, etymological dictionaries and specialized references on the *macho* concept for Spanish as well as English. My analysis leads me to conclude that the semantic shift of *macho*, at least in its written form, developed in both sides of the Mexican-American border at the beginning of the XX century.

**Keywords.** *macho*; Mock Spanish; semantic pejoration; ethnic slurs (ethnophaulism); Mexican Spanish, American English

**RESUMEN.** En este artículo se analiza la trayectoria de la extensión semántica del término *macho* del español, con el significado originalmente neutro ‘animal de sexo masculino’, al peyorativo ‘hombre con características de animal’. La peyoración semántica pertenece a una de las técnicas que Hill (1995b) identifica al describir el *Mock Spanish*, un tipo de discurso racista utilizado por hablantes monolingües del inglés cuando usan palabras en español. Prototípicamente, el origen del cambio semántico, que convierte la connotación neutral o positiva de un término, a una negativa, radica en el o la hablante monolingüe de inglés americano. Este no parece ser el caso del término *macho*. Existen múltiples portavoces que siguen la misma línea teórica del *Mock Spanish* y posicionan la peyoración semántica de *macho* en el discurso del inglés americano. El objetivo de este trabajo es identificar el origen de esta peyoración. Metodológicamente, esto es llevado a cabo mediante una inspección léxica de la acuñación más antigua del término *macho* en su acepción peyorativa en español y del contenido semántico de los primeros préstamos de *macho* en inglés. Con este fin consulté diferentes tipos de fuentes, como corpora diacrónica, diccionarios etimológicos y trabajos especializados en el término *macho* en inglés y en español. Mi análisis me lleva a concluir que el cambio semántico de *macho*, por lo menos de acuerdo a las fuentes escritas, ocurre en ambos lados de la frontera México-americana a principios del siglo XX.

**Palabras clave.** *macho*; Mock Spanish; peyoración semántica, insultos étnicos (etnofaulismo); español mexicano, inglés americano

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The meaning of Mock Spanish*

Mock Spanish refers to a type of covert racist discourse described by the American anthropologist Jane Hill. This register is used by monolingual white speakers of American English and is described as “a narrow, constipated little register of insults” (Hill 1995a, p. 205, fn. 14) with the characteristics of semantic pejoration, exaggerated mispronunciation and intentional agrammaticality. According to Hill (1998, 2005) this set of tactics is used by monolingual speakers of American English to display the image of a “desirable colloquial persona” at the expenses of Spanish speakers, who are relegated to “a zone of foreignness and disorder, richly fleshed out with denigrating stereotypes.” (Hill 2008:128f) Some of the best known Mock Spanish items are the words *amigo*, *cerveza*, *mañana*, the phrases *hasta la vista*, *no problema*, *caca de pee pee*, *much-o*, *trouble-o* and the frame *el X-o*, as in *el cheap-o*, *el truck-o*.

Let us take a look at one example to illustrate the dynamics of Mock Spanish: *hasta la vista*. The intended meaning of *hasta la vista* is in Spanish a neutral ‘see you later’. When used in English, however, this phrase gains a rather contrary meaning, expressing something like ‘I won’t see you ever again!’, as it is used by the character *Terminator* when he finally kills his enemy. In fact, the actor of this character, Arnold Schwarzenegger, continued using this phrase in his subsequent political career when defeating opponents.

Mock Spanish *hasta la vista* has been adopted in many languages. Two popular instances are the Belgian cinematographic drama *Hasta la vista!* released in 2011 (dir. Geoffrey Enthoven), as well as the Serbian song in Eurovision 2020 *Hasta la vista* by the group Hurricane. The movie deals with a badly diseased and two handicapped Flemish friends who travel to Spain to discover the sex experience, but one of them never returns to Belgium. He succumbs to his disease at a Spanish beach. Similarly, in the Serbian song the chorus lines *hasta la vista, baby* are dedicated to a male lover who does not respect the relationship with the lyrical identity of the song. Both cases are the antithesis of *hasta la vista*; the former because of death (= ‘I won’t be able to see you again’), the latter due to a failed relationship (= ‘I don’t want to see you ever again’). The development of this originally Spanish phrase entails a semantic pejoration with a subsequent popularization similar to the one of *macho*.

Mock Spanish has a long and prosperous history in American English. The oldest tokens that Jane Hill reports are: *peon* [‘pi:ɒn] (1634), *calaboose* (1792), actually Spanish *calabozo*, *adios* (1837), *vamos* (1900), (2008:133), and *Merry Hilda* for the name *Merejildo* (1860), (1995b §2). This type of register flourishes by the middle of the twentieth century, and along with it, our item under investigation.

Historically, the Spanish *macho* clearly differs from its Mock Spanish counterpart. As inherited from its Latin etymon *MASCŪLUS*, *macho* used to be limited to a neutral gender specification.

*Mas, maris* se utilizaba en latín para designar al sexo que genera hijos fertilizando óvulos del otro sexo. El diminutivo *masculus* se aplicaba a los cachorros de sexo masculino. En latín vulgar, este diminutivo se convirtió en *maschu*, *masculu*, que tenía el sentido de ‘pequeño macho’ o ‘machito’ en el español de hoy. Todo ese proceso ya se había completado cuando Nebrija publicó su Diccionario latino-

español (1495), en el que ya definía **macho** como ‘animal del sexo masculino’ o viril...” (Soca 2006, p. 156, emphasis in the original)<sup>2</sup>

The Spanish term *macho* was for long exclusively the connotationally unadorned male pendant of the female animal. Over time, the semantic element ‘male’ has been kept, but other referents (‘man’, ‘ideology’, ‘person<sup>3</sup>’) have been added, plus an extended expressive meaning. Additional *macho*-attributes listed in the RAE (2014) are ‘strength’, ‘courage’ and ‘foolishness’, reflecting these only a few of the broad semantic spectrum found in the literature and in popular use.

Nowadays, Spanish *macho* is not only a semantically complex and emotionally charged concept, but it shows further diatopic differences as well. Polysemic and connotational distinctions have been reported for some Latin American and Spanish varieties, cf. Grace and Głaz (2010, p. 324). The focus in this paper will be *macho* in Mexican Spanish and American English, unless otherwise specified.

### 1.2 Research questions, hypotheses and methodology

A great deal of academic ink has been spilled over the *macho* concept in México (Machillot 2013; Gutmann 2007; and Mendoza 1962) as well as its Mexican-American interconnection (Morales 2015; Paredes A. 2000; Guilbault 2015; Paredes A. R. 1971), thereto a series of articles and monographs pertaining to the field of cultural studies or anthropology. Herein, these results will be exposed and analyzed. Special attention will be paid to the borrowing path of the concept under scrutiny in American English, which has been mostly neglected as object of investigation. It has been repeatedly assumed that the use of *macho* in its semantic pejorated form is a US-creation (see below). The aim of the present study is, thus, to examine these results from a linguistic perspective in order to support, modify or complete the cultural and anthropologically-based information. Accordingly, the following research questions have been formulated: what are the earliest attestations of *macho* in American English? In which context do they appear? Could these data shed some light on the reconstruction of a possible borrowing path? Complementarily, I want to see if the data gives account of the linguistic group that created the semantic pejoration. To achieve this, it was necessary to inspect a combination of resources, such as etymological dictionaries, historical corpora, investigations on Hispanicisms in English, diverse studies on the *macho*-concept, as well as the primary literature referred to in the different sources. The methodological steps will be subsequently illustrated.

The probability of *macho* being of exclusive use of spoken discourse in English due to a slang-tag (Murray, 1996), made a twofold approximation necessary. The first one was to look for the oldest coinage of *macho* in a traditional manner, i.e. in historical corpora: 1) *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) (Davies, 2010) for English; 2) *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* i.e. CORDE for Spanish and 3) etymological dictionaries (Cresswell, 2010; Harper, n.d.). A potential incompleteness of these data bases persuaded me to verify the primary sources in such cases where the reference was

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<sup>2</sup> Mar, maris was used in Latin to denote the sex that engenders offsprings fertilizing ovules of the opposite sex. The diminutive form masculus was used to refer to male whelps. In Vulgar Latin, this diminutive form was reduced to masclu, masculu, and had the meaning ‘little male’ or *machito* in today’s Spanish. This development was already accomplished by the time Nebrija published his Latin-Spanish Dictionary (1495), where he defines **macho** as ‘male gendered animal’ or virile...” (Translation: ARGTE)

<sup>3</sup> Other referents can be plants or tools, the former because of its reproductive techniques and the latter due to the shape derived by a metaphor related to the sexual organs, *macho* in Spanish can also refer to devices that penetrate through some cavity, like the plug (*clavija*) into outlet (*enchufe*).

provided and to scan for the item under inspection in other texts of the same author. This exploration conjointly delivered the context of the entry. The second approximation consisted of a literary search on diverse studies on the *macho*-concept, as well as investigations on Hispanicisms in English. This additional query was expected to pave the way to identify some pivotal context or influential author for the introduction of the semantic pejorated *macho* in American English.

Before going on, the notion of *semantic pejoration* deserves to be clarified. *Pejoratives* are types of *expressives* (Scott and Stevens 2019:10), namely words or phrases that contain “some emotional and evaluative attitude with a high degree of affectedness.” (Gutzmann 2013:3f) These expressions can be of denotational or connotational nature. Whereas denotations exhibit a “direct reference of a sign to an object”, connotations embrace an “adjacent meaning, which is added to [the] primary meaning.” The denotational aspect or referential meaning points to a substance, the connotational augment adds qualities to that substance, particularly an emotive meaning in the fashion of metaphoric senses, associating images, experiences or affective values. (Garza-Cuarón 1991:119f) For Chandler (2007:138) connotation refers “to the socio-cultural and ‘personal’ associations (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter’s class, age, gender, ethnicity and so on.” Since connotation is open to interpretation, Chandler explains that the result is polysemy. The sign is context-dependent.

Coming back to the word under scrutiny, in the case of a human referent, *macho* denotes a male person and connotes X characteristics. The characteristics evoked can be positively or negatively evaluated. The latter is a case of semantic pejoration. Since this evaluation tends to be of subjective nature, in this paper *negative qualities* are going to be those that resemble an ‘animal-like behavior’<sup>4</sup>, in accordance with the metaphor VIOLENT HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR, cf. Kövecses (2010:152)

The working hypothesis is that the term *macho* belongs to the Mock Spanish repertoire, but was integrated in US-English in an atypical manner. The semantic pejoration of *macho* seems to have been a collaborative contribution. A group of Mexican Spanish and US-English speakers created the semantic extension and subsequent pejoration of *macho* converting this item in one of the most successful Mock Spanish items in American English and, meanwhile, in many other languages.

### 1.3. Border depending *macho*-meaning

Crosslinguistically, Mock Spanish *macho* referring to an ‘animal-like man’ is quite widespread. This Mock Spanish item is present in the lexicon of remote and unrelated languages: German (*macho*), Turkish (*maço*), Japanese (/mattyo/) and Chinese (*dà nán zǐ zhǔ yì*) are some examples as confirmed by my informants<sup>5</sup>. The borrowing of *macho* in these diverse languages was probably taken from English. There exists in fact some intuition that the semantic pejoration of *macho* was a White American creation, some cases in point are Guilbault (2015), Machillot (2013), Burciaga (1996:227), Moreno de

<sup>4</sup> I actually advocate for animal rights and do not evaluate animal behavior negatively. Yet, I use this definition in accordance with the mostly semantically derogated animal metaphor VIOLENT HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR, as illustrated in Kövecses (2010) examples ‘She *bitched* about Dan, but I knew she was devoted to him’ and ‘He was an *animal* on Saturday afternoon and is a disgrace to British football’, “humans attributed human characteristics to animals and then reapplied these characteristics to humans. That is, animals were personified first, and then the “human-based animal characteristics” were used to understand human behavior.” (p. 152)

<sup>5</sup> I want to thank Öcel Secgin, my Turkish informant, Yan Ni, my Chinese informant, as well as Yufuko Takashima and Yasuyuki Matsuda, my Japanese informants, for instructing me about the existence of the borrowing *macho* in their languages.

Alba (2013) and Paredes (1971). According to Guilbault (2015:347), the meaning of *macho* depends on which side of the US-Mexico border the speaker comes from, stating that “[t]he American *macho* is a chauvinistic, a brute, uncouth, selfish, loud, abrasive, capable of inflicting pain, and sexually promiscuous.” (*ibid.* p. 348). On the contrary, the Hispanic *macho* embodies positive qualities. “[E]s muy macho’ the women in [Guilbault’s] family [would] nod approvingly, describing a man they respect.”, points out Guilbault. For them, a *macho* is “manly, responsible, hardworking, a man in charge, a patriarch. A man who expresses strength through silence. “Whereas in English, the word *macho* devalues Latin men, in Spanish it “ennobles” them. (Guilbault 2015:348)

Melhuus (1996:241) indicates that in the Mexican village where she did her field work, “the terms *macho* and *machista* [were] used to characterize a true man and real male behaviour.” Machillot (2013:143) comes to similar conclusions, when he expresses that being *macho* in Mexico had originally a positive connotation, as an expression of courage, strength and virility. Paredes (1971) defends the idea that the semantic pejoration of *macho* has some influence from American English speakers, unfortunately he does not give concrete examples of how this takes place. Nonetheless, he mentions that...

...Mexican *machismo* is not exactly as it has been painted for us by people who like to let their imaginations dwell on the rape of Indian women. *Machismo* does not appear in Mexican folklore until very recent times. In a more-or-less comic form, it was characteristic of the lower classes in pre-Revolutionary times. In a more sentimental and meretricious style, it is identified today with the Mexican middle class. We note, furthermore, a certain influence of the United States. All this makes us ask: How Mexican is *machismo* and to what degree is it a Hispanic, a New World, or a universal manifestation? (p. 26)

Paredes argues that the phenomenon of associating such properties like courage, strength and male superiority with some figure has a reflection in a great variety of unrelated languages. He compares, for instance, the Mexican *charro* with the American cowboy. Yet, in American discourse the Spanish word *macho* additionally became a symbol of male aggressiveness. Furthermore, the men that feminists fought against were *machistas*. Gutmann (2007:227) believes that the word *machismo* has a racist history and explains that from the very first printed item of the word in English on...

...machismo has been associated with negative character traits not among men in general, but specifically among Mexican, Mexican American, and Latin American men. Contemporary popular usage of the term *machismo* in the United States often serves to rank men according to their presumably inherent national and racial characters. Such analysis utilizes non-existing pretensions to make denigrating generalizations about fictitious Mexican male culture traits (Gutmann 2007:227).

Paredes’ (1971) association of male characteristics with certain figures has been called *personification* of an ethnic or social group – as described underneath. This reveals a semiotic trajectory with an intermediate station: the actual *denomination*. By denomination I mean the moment in which a new linguistic sign relation has been cognitively chosen to refer to the already conceptualized referent, which is the personification of a type of human referent in this paper. Personifications are frequently denominated by means of semantic extensions. This occurs frequently in Spanish with the word

*gringo*, which has complex interacting connotational semantics, but originally a specific referent: the Anglo-American. In Mexican Spanish, it repeatedly occurs that Europeans or people from other nationalities are called *gringas* or *gringos* if they look like the Anglo-American type they have already personified. This is actually a new sign relation, a freshly-created semiosis. This linguistic sign relation is often nonrecurring or limited to oral communication, but it can even go beyond and get established in the verbal repertoire, or it can be codified. I have called this last stage *codification*. Codification is the moment this sign enters into the written language code. This itinerary shows that before the identification of a first coinage of a word, there is already a whole process with an obscured duration behind. In the following, we will illustrate these stages in the context of the word *macho*.

## 2. The journey to the semiosis

### 2.1 The Codification of *macho* in Mexican Spanish

The CORDE was helpful for tracking possible *macho* sources, despite lacking some essential coinages. For the year 1934, this corpus shows four instances of the word *machismo* in the novel *Huasipungo* by Jorge Icaza but none of *macho*. Yet, when inspecting this source, we can in fact find the *macho* item, as well. A similar situation occurs with Samuel Ramos, whose influence on the introduction of the word *macho* in the academic discourse has been the scope of analysis of many scholars, cf. Paredes, 1971; Gutmann, 2007; and Machillot, 2013. These two *macho* cases are absent in the CORDE (2) and (3).

- (1) Pronto las fuerzas femeninas cayeron en una furia de imposibles. Lloró, suplicó, se mordió los labios hasta hacerse sangre, pero aquello excitaba más y más al **macho** que, atenazándola con su peso, desgarró su vida<sup>6</sup>. (2006[1934]:45 bold print: ARG T)

*Macho* appears seven times in the text of the Ecuadorian writer, Jorge Icaza, of which four are instances in which the Spanish man is abusing sexually of an indigenous woman, cf. (1). Since this behavior resembles an “animal-like man”, a savage feeding on his victim, we have described this as semantic pejoration.

Examples (2) and (3) are found in the essay *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México* by Samuel Ramos. As if talking about Icaza's Spanish men, Samuel Ramos describes an animal-like phallogentric *macho*.

- (2) El falo sugiere al ‘pelado’ la idea del poder. De aquí ha derivado un concepto muy empobrecido del hombre. Como él es, en efecto, un ser sin contenido sustancial, trata de llenar su vacío con el único valor que está a su alcance: el del **macho**.<sup>7</sup> (1951[1934]:54, emphasis in the original, bold print: ARG T)
- (3) Cuando éste se compara con el hombre civilizado extranjero y resalta su nulidad, se consuela del siguiente modo: “Un europeo – dice – tiene la ciencia, el arte, la técnica, etc., etc.; aquí no tenemos nada de esto, pero ...somos muy hombres”

<sup>6</sup> Soon the female forces collapsed in a rage of impossibles. She cried, pleaded and bit her lips 'till they bled, but that increased the excitement of the *macho* even more to the point in which he gripped her with his own weight and ripped her life.

<sup>7</sup> The phallus reminds the *pelado* of the idea of power. Out of this derives a very impoverished concept of man. He is, in fact, a being without substantial content. He tries to fill in his emptiness with the only value he can reach: being a *macho*. (Translation: ARG T)

Hombres en la acepción zoológica de la palabra, es decir, un **macho** que disfruta de toda la potencia animal<sup>8</sup>. (1951[1934]:54f, emphasis in the original, bold print: ARGT)

Samuel Ramos publishes this reflexion in 1934 and achieves broad recognition, especially in the USA, cf. Paredes (1971), Gutmann (2007) and Machillot (2013). The work of Samuel Ramos is relevant because it is supposed to be a scientific treatment of Mexican men, contrary to Icaza's novel, which is presented as fiction<sup>9</sup>. Ramos' analysis is not very favorable to Mexican men, which gains more transparence when looking at the alternative sobriquet that he uses: *pelado*. The noun *pelado* is a colloquial term in Mexican Spanish to refer to men from low-income households. Ramos' generalizing description of Mexican men fits perfectly into the semantic pejorative meaning of the Mock Spanish version of *macho*. This is actually the first coinage of the pejorated *macho* in the academic discourse (Machillot 2013) and in printed language. The next literary printed version of *macho* surpasses by far the already acquired level of popularity: *El Laberinto de la Soledad* by Octavio Paz, whilst in 1990 with the Nobel Prize awarded, back in 1950 first published, cf. (4) and (5).

- (4) El chingón es el **macho**, el que abre. La chingada, la hembra, la pasividad, pura, inerme ante el exterior.<sup>10</sup> (Paz, 1992[1981]:32<sup>11</sup>, in CORDE; emphasis: ARGT)
- (5) El “**macho**” representa el polo masculino de la vida. La frase “yo soy tu padre” no tiene ningún sabor paternal, ni se dice para proteger, resguardar o conducir, sino para imponer una superioridad, esto es, para humillar. Su significado real no es distinto al del verbo chingar y algunos de sus derivados. “**Macho**” es el Gran Chingón. Una palabra resume la agresividad, impasibilidad, invulnerabilidad, uso descarnado de la violencia, y demás atributos del “**macho**”: poder. La fuerza, pero desligada de toda noción de orden: el poder arbitrario, la voluntad sin freno y sin cauce.<sup>12</sup> (Paz, 1992[1981]:33, in CORDE; emphasis in the original, bold print: ARGT)

First published in 1934<sup>13</sup>, it was probably Samuel Ramos' *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*<sup>14</sup>, the motivating force that inspired further psychological descriptions (Paz 1992[1981], Bermúdez 1955) and subsequent anthropological studies (Mo-

<sup>8</sup> When he compares himself with the civilized foreign man and highlights his nullity, he takes comfort as follows: “A European – he says – has science, art, technique, etc., etc.. Here we do not have that, but...we are tough men”. Men in the zoological meaning of the word, that is to say, a *macho* that enjoys the animal potency. (Translation: ARGT)

<sup>9</sup> In fact, it could be described as fictional truth in the sense of Riffaterre (1990).

<sup>10</sup> The badass is the *macho*, the one who unwraps. The screwed woman, the female, the passivity, pure, defenseless to the outside. (Translation: ARGT)

<sup>11</sup> This was the edition I consulted.

<sup>12</sup> The “badass” represents the male pole of life. The phrase “I am your father” does not have either any paternal sense, nor it is outered to protect, to shelter, or to lead, but to impose superiority, that is to say, to humiliate. Its real meaning is not distinct from the verb to fuck (= *chingar*) and some of its derivations. The “Macho” is the great fucker (= *chingón*). One word summarizes the aggressiveness, impassivity, invulnerability, brutal use of violence and other characteristics of the “macho”: power. The strength, but detached of any sense of order: the arbitrary power, the will without any obstacles, nor direction. (Translation: ARGT)

<sup>13</sup> But I consulted the edition of 1951.

<sup>14</sup> English translation: *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*

rales 2015; Machillot 2013; Gutmann 2007; Paredes 1971 and Lewis 1966) on the putative Mexican male character, the *macho*. Not seldom, the focus of attention was the antagonistic nature of being *macho* in Mexico and in the USA.

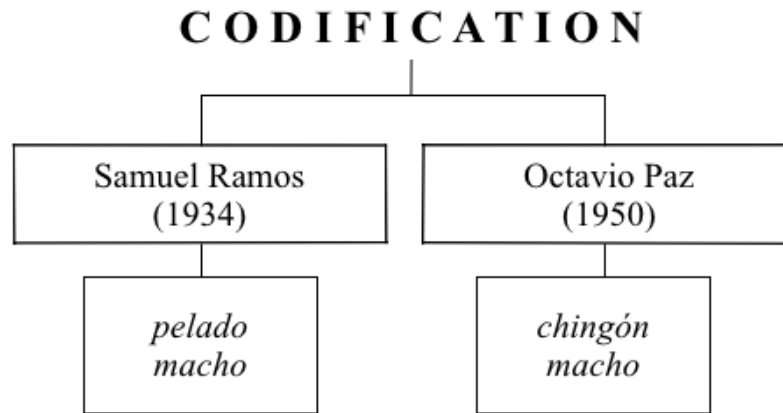


Figure 1. Macho codification along with alternative monikers by Mexican intellectuals<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2 Personification of the Mexican macho

According to Machillot (2013) the radicle of the negatively connoted *signifié* of *macho* already existed in the postcolonial period. He explains that although the word *macho* was not under circulation at that time yet, its personification was: the *mestizo*. From the incipient independent nation state on, the *mestizo* was subjected to discrimination. The color division had been established, *mestizos* were lowborn and the white skinned European-oriented population, highborn. Of course the limits dictated by skin color were anything but clear.

The “racially”-based hierarchical structure that dominated Mexican society during the colonial period was the origin of prejudice against the dark-skinned local population, and later against the resulting *mestizos*. This leads later to an economically based type of discrimination of higher class against lower class *mestizos*. The terms to name the lower class *mestizos* acquired gradually the pejorative meaning that the word *macho* has. “*Mestizo vulgar, pelado o macho* han sido todos, en su tiempo y a su modo, objeto de prejuicios por parte de cierta élite.”<sup>16</sup> (Machillot 2013:15) Machillot’s description needs to be complemented because he is not mentioning the *indio*, who is still behind the *mestizo* in the social ladder. Despite the gradual diminution of discrimination against the indigenous population, it still prevails in the Mexican society. An indigenous language is frequently derogatorily called *dialecto* and to look indigenous is undesirable. To call a person *india* or *indio* may mean, depending on the context, 'ugly', 'poor', 'ignorant', 'savage', or simply 'dark-skinned' – which is already bad enough, cf. Castellanos Guerrero (2001)

The following chart illustrates the stratification of postcolonial Mexico. Men pertaining to the two lowest social classes, *indios* and *mestizos muy morenos*, were more prompt to be stereotyped as *macho*. I wonder if Octavio Paz and Samuel Ramos included themselves in their descriptions of Mexican men<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *pelado* 'pauper', *chingón* 'badass'.

<sup>16</sup> “*Mestizo vulgar, pelado or macho* have all been, some how and at a given time, object of prejudice from some elite groups” (Translation: ARGT)

<sup>17</sup> The translations may seem a bit bizarre, but it is an attempt to show how susceptible Mexicans are when it comes to skin color: *prieto* 'very, very dark (but not black)', *muy moreno* 'very dark', *moreno claro* 'light brown', *blanco* 'white'.



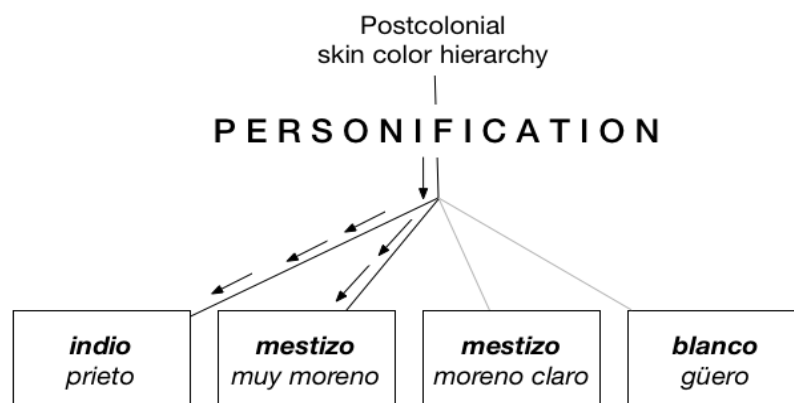


Figure 2. Postcolonial macho-personification: indio, mestizo muy moreno.

According to Paredes (1971) and Machillot (2013), the positive connoted semantic version of *macho* to denote a male referent acquired high popularity in colloquial language after the Revolution. According to Mendoza (1962), the nationalist uproars of the Revolution illustrate the clearest personification of the *macho* in Mexican Spanish, as portrayed in the *corridos* – being the actual word *macho* not mentioned in the text of the songs. Mendoza comes across two types of *macho* personalities: *machos valientes* and *machos braveros*. Some tags for the *machos valientes* are *valiente* (brave), *charro* (a gallant horseman) and *hombre* (a trustful man); the *machos braveros*, on the other hand, are tagged as *tu padre* (dominating or superior as your father), *muy hombre* (virile and/or fearless and/or barbaric), *bravo* (savage, brutal, and/or primitive). We can see here an example of how this takes place. The *signifié* of a *macho* man in the next strophe of the *corrido* from Coahuila (ca. 1930) is described exhibiting recognition,<sup>18</sup> cf. (6).

- (6) *¡Qué bonitos son los hombres  
que se matan pecho a pecho,  
cada uno con su pistola,  
defendiendo su derecho!*

The following is a fragment of the *corrido* ‘Santanón’ (7) and it is an illustration of a *macho bravo*, Mendoza (1962:81):

- (7) *Aquí llegó Santanón / ¿A ver quién se faja al brinco?  
Dicen que aquí hay un ratón / con una cuarenta y cinco.  
Y que tra[e] cuarenta balas / y se las da de maldito.  
Voy a ver, a ver si jala / para darnos un tirito.  
Se me hace que es correlón / lo digo aunque no le cuadre;  
porque aquí llegó su padre / que se llama Santanón<sup>19</sup>.*

<sup>18</sup> Men, who kill themselves face to face, are really pretty, each one with his pistol, defending his law.

<sup>19</sup> Here is Santanón / Let’s see who comes to blows? / They say there is a rat here / with a gun. / and should have forty bullets / and he considers himself a bad guy / I will see if he accepts / that we fight with each other / I think he is a coward / I say it no matter if he does not like it / because his father has arrived / whose name is Santanón.

This can be expressed schematically as follows:

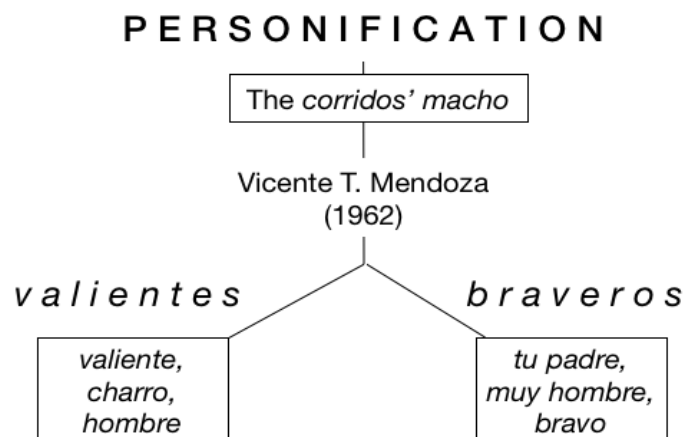


Figure 3. Macho types in Mexican corridos.

We have seen in this section that the personification of the *macho* item is present in the Spanish language in two different forms of expression. The first one being identifying phrases (*soy tu padre, muy hombre*, etc.); the second one being codified descriptions of the *macho* type within the text of popular folk songs, *corridos*.

### 2.3 *Machismo as a hint for the existing macho denomination*

The codification of the semantic pejorated *macho* in Spanish appears in the year 1934 in Jorge Icaza and Samuel Ramos. This year is only an orientation and no exact dating, though. *Macho* as denomination could have been present before. A hint could be given by the word *machismo*, the closest *macho* derivation: Actually, the abstract suffix *-ismo* denotes either a tendency, a theory, or a system, i.e. *machismo* can be paraphrased as ‘the tendency of being of the *macho*-type’. The *macho*-type with a negative sense is a prerequisite of *machismo*, at least when expressing a similar negative connoted ideology, which actually happens to be the case. We find, for instance, that the first derivation of *macho* in the CORDE dates back to 1927 in *Las siete Cucas* and it is written by the Spanish writer Eugenio Noel<sup>20</sup>. A paraphrase of the context can mark the negative connotation more clearly: the overuse of *machismo* has been ill-fated (*funesto*) for this race, cf. (8).

- (8) [E]n nuestra raza, o se ha creído el adulterio imposible – porque si a esa raza le ha sobrado algo es precisamente el **machismo** que tan funesto le ha sido al aplicarlo a todo...<sup>21</sup> (Noel, 1927, in CORDE; emphasis: ARG)

The codification of *machismo* is registered in 1927, only a few years before the first written appearance of *macho*, which is codified the year 1934. To assume that by 1927 *macho* had already been under circulation in the oral discourse, does not seem to be improbable to me.

<sup>20</sup> The original could not be consulted.

<sup>21</sup> In our race, adultery has been believed to be impossible – for this race has had too much of *machismo* that it has resulted ill-fated when applying it to everything. (Translation: ARG)

### 3. The macho man in American English

#### 3.1 The codification of the Spanish borrowing

Since *macho* in English exhibits semantic pejoration, it fits into the Mock Spanish definition. This becomes especially evident in specialized dictionaries.

Similar to the term “male chauvinism,” the Spanish noun *machismo* describes a virile, overconfident, and dominating male. [...] In addition, Spanish-speaking people often use this noun in order to qualify a person as exceptionally strong or brave, yet positive connotations of the word *machista* are rare, as it is usually perceived as derogative. (Martín, 2008:161)

In Cresswell's Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins (2010) dates the word *macho* back to the 1920's and explains the etymology as follows:

when Mexicans described a man as *macho*, it was usually to compliment him on his vigor and virility. But when English-speaking Americans adopted the word from Mexican Spanish in the 1920's it acquired overtones of ‘masculine in an overly assertive or aggressive way’. (Cresswell, 2010, emphasis in the original)

The *Online Etymology Dictionary* (Harper, n.d.) provides a quite neutral definition ignoring near qualifications or connotational adornments of the word, but does mention that the original Spanish term referred to ‘a male animal’:

1928 (n.) “tough guy,” from Spanish *macho* “male animal,” noun use of adjective meaning “masculine, virile,” from Latin *masculus* (see *masculine*). As an adjective, first attested in English 1959. (Harper, n.d., emphasis in the original)

The very first *macho* coinages found in American English *did* reflect the Spanish semantic affairs, though. The earliest printed *macho*-items present in the COHA date back to the year 1843. We find five *macho* tokens in 1843, four of them are in George H. Borrow's *The Bible in Spain*<sup>22</sup>, the other one is in *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent During the Years 1799-1804* originally published in French by Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland<sup>23</sup>. These early tokens did borrow the Spanish semantics, Borrow's *machos* refer to male riding animals, whereas Humboldt/Bonpland's *macho* has a plant referent, i.e. a male cactus (*tuna macho*). In this corpus, the earliest coinage with a male human referent<sup>24</sup> is found in 1961.

Based on the *Oxford English Dictionary* it is often acknowledged that the earliest printing date of *macho* is 1928 (Moreno de Alba 2013; Cannon 1996:43; Murray 1996:119), however, the semantics of this token reflect the current picture only partially. Morales (2015:9) illustrates this early meaning, which is found in an Article in *The Nation* written by the left journalist Carleton Beals. In this context, the *machos* are the

<sup>22</sup> I consulted the edition of the year 2011.

<sup>23</sup> I consulted the edition of the year 1995.

<sup>24</sup> I ignored a *macho*-item of the year 1952 in *Ya hablo macho espanol, Martin* (in *The wonderful country* by Tom Lea) because it is a misspelling and as such, it is not related to the item under scrutiny here. Be that as it may, this example fosters Burciaga's analysis of the (mis)use of hispanicisms in American English Literature (see below).

American marines fighting in Nicaragua, as referred by the Nicaraguan refugees, cf. (9).

- (9) The **Macho** (Americans) have taken El Chipote [sic]. (Morales 2015:9, boldprint: ARG T)

This early nominal use of the *macho*-item has a human referent and, since American marines are referred during the Nicaraguan war and precisely by the adversaries, we can expect a negative connotation. The exclusive referential mismatch with the current *macho* is the ethnic peer. This form-meaning correspondence of *macho* faded away from the American English landscape entirely.

The oldest instance of the adjectival use of the *macho*-item is found in Ernest Hemingway. This is neither acknowledged in etymological dictionaries, nor in English corpora. By an ironic twist of fate, the American man often described as the *macho* prototype results to be the one who introduces *macho* with a non-American human referent into the English language. This is done in the Spanish bullfighting context, cf. (10).

- (10) **Macho**: male, masculine, abundantly endowed with male reproductive organs; torero **macho**: bullfighter whose work is on a basis of courage rather than perfected technique and style, although the style may come later. (Hemingway 1932:346, emphasis: ARG T)

Hemingway writes this with awe in 1932, the pinnacle of bullfighting. By this time, *macho* had already been used to refer to American marines in a derogative way in 1928 by Carleton Beals. A couple of years later, Hemingway uses this item with a phallogentric description, but with admiration. Hemingway was a lifelong adherent of bullfighting events and made famous the until then rather unknown *Festival de San Fermín* in Pamplona. Nonetheless, Hemingway's *macho* represents an animal-like man, which reflects our operationalization of semantic pejoration: an animal-like behavior. After all, not everyone has Hemingway's positive perception of a *torero*.

Almost 30 years of distance, in 1961, the COHA shows a further *macho* token with a human referent. This time the *macho* is embedded in a context of violence, i.e. in a context that embodies the semantic pejorated meaning, cf. (11).

- (11) In a fight, I would never give up or say, "Enough," even though the other was killing me. I would try to go to my death, smiling. That is what we mean by being "**macho**," by being manly. Life around here is more real than among people with money. Here a boy of ten isn't scared off at the sight of a female sexual organ. Nor is he shocked when he sees a guy lifting someone's wallet, or using a knife on a man. Just having seen so much evil at close range makes him face reality. After a while, even death itself doesn't frighten us. We get our bruises in the struggle against life... (Lewis 1961:38, in COHA; bold print: ARG T)

This token is found in the novel *The Children of Sánchez* by Oscar Lewis. As a matter of fact, Oscar Lewis is one of the US-scholars who was in close contact with the Mexican anthropological scene. This *macho* portrait became the most quoted definition of *macho* in anthropological studies in the USA.

In Mexico, *the Children of Sánchez* was highly accepted by some members of the intellectual elite – i.e. Rosario Castellanos, Juan Rulfo, Jaime García Terrés, Emilio

Uranga and Emmanuel Caballo – and heavily rejected by the official party of the Revolution, triggering this a controversial discussion, cf. Machillot (2003:142).

The reception of this work was different on the other side of the border. In the USA *The Children of Sánchez* was even included in some high school's literature programs in the 1970's and the main character, Mr. Sánchez, was and is still perceived as the stereotypical Mexican man.

The *familia Sánchez* is a case study in Oscar Lewis' anthropological work. Lewis coins the term *culture of poverty* based on this study and, furthermore, he derives from these typical characteristics of families with scarce resources. In *The Children of Sánchez*, the main character is Jesús Sánchez, a widower, who takes care of his children. Mr. Sánchez is a hard working father of four children, whose main characteristics are to be aggressive and a womanizer. The Sánchez family is a dysfunctional family that lives in absolute poverty in Mexico City. The book has had immense success, but Oscar Lewis was sued in Mexico and his book was temporarily banned in the country.

Mr. *Sánchez* embodied the Mexican man and framed the *macho* referent. This use of *macho* turned soon into “an accepted stereotype of the Latin male. And like all stereotypes it distorts the truth.” (Guilbault 2015:349) This ideology is refinedly shown in Lewis' work on the concept of *culture of poverty*, where his 'poor' subjects cannot belong to the WASP community, but to Afro- or Latin American ones. Lewis' “studies of poverty and family life have centered largely in Mexico. On occasion some of [his] Mexican friends have suggested delicately that [he] turn[s] to a study of poverty in [his] own country.” (Lewis, 1966:20) His answer to this demand is a study of Puerto Rican families.

After Lewis' success in the USA, more and more *macho* tokens begin to appear. The year 1965 came out the next *macho* items in the novels “A Play in the Fields of the Lord” by Peter Matthiessen and “The Arrangement” by Elia Kazan<sup>25</sup>.

- (12) The crowd at the airstrip cheered El Lobo as he tuned the motor? "Ole! **Muy macho**, hombre!"? saluting the beard and the gold earring, the mechanical genius and the revolver. It was commonly assumed, and confirmed by the infernal clatter of the engine, that El Lobo would disappear in the wake of Moon and die a hero's death before the sun had set. (Matthiessen 1991<sup>1965</sup> and in COHA, emphasis: ARGT)
- (13) Well, one afternoon I was going on about Collier's sexual self-advertising, how he was pushing his product all the time, strutting his **macho** and rattling his cojones (we'd just done it in Gwen's apartment, and were maybe getting up to the point of doing it again). When Gwen began to giggle and my male column collapsed.(Kazan 1965:45 and in COHA, emphasis: ARGT)
- (14) I was jealous of my father and those girls, but I also admired him, because he was **macho**. So it is the world; isn't it the world? The woman lasts short time. The man has to show his **macho**. But Alberto is a goddam good man. Even with her, or whoever, he never let anyone hurt me the rest of my life. (Kazan 1967:207, in COHA, emphasis: ARGT)
- (15) The mistress's brothers, all three of them, jumped Rojas. He was very **macho**, as Mrs. Rojas had said, and he gave as good as he got. (Kazan 1967:209, in COHA, emphasis: ARGT)

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<sup>25</sup> I consulted the edition of the year 1967.

The *macho* items (12) and (15) embody men surrounded by violence,(13) and (14) are phallogentric men, experts in sexual escapades.

Let us synthesize the codification of *macho* in American English, cf. Chart (4). The first *macho* items appear in 1843 and reflect the Spanish semantics: *macho* as a male animal and as a male plant. In 1928 the journalist Carleton Beals reuses the epithet Nicaraguan refugees used to refer to American marines. In 1932 Ernest Hemingway prints the *macho* item to describe ‘maleness’ and a bullfighter technique (*torero macho*). It was not until 1961 that Oscar Lewis used the *macho* item to refer to a tendency of Mexican men in an established pejorative manner. This last codification had already a previous personification and we are going to tackle this issue in the next section.

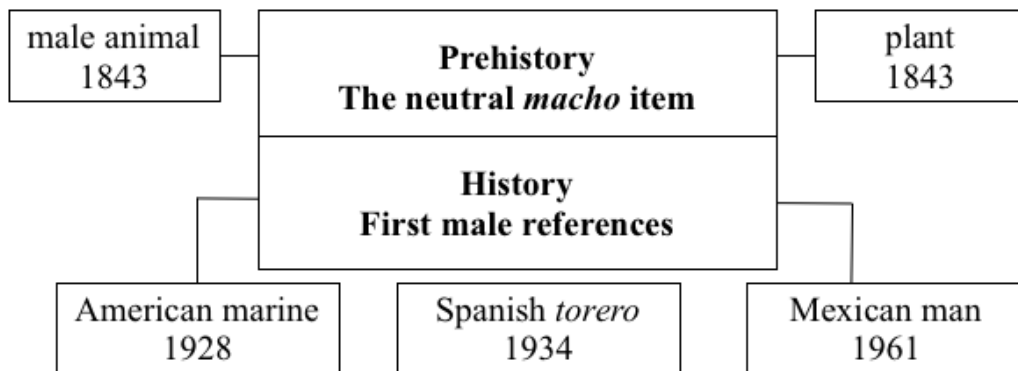


Figure 4. Referential evolution of the *macho* borrowing in US-English.

### 3.2. American Literature and use of Hispanicisms

There is actually seldom certainty about time, context and purpose of a word entering into the verbal repertoire of a linguistic community. Yet, for the exegetic labor, it is normally deemed satisfactory to identify these circumstances in written text, as well as possible additional external related aspects. The particular case of the Spanish item *macho* in the American context, amid a prejudiced atmosphere, is likely to have struggled a while to find its way into the written discourse. Burciaga's (1996) findings support this hypothesis. For the use of Spanish words in Anglo-American literature dealing with Mexican Americans, Burciaga observes that hispanicisms are by the end of the 19 hundreds reduced to a minimum – this already represents an important hindrance to get integrated into the codified repertoire of borrowings. Burciaga further finds out that, if hispanicisms were employed, they were often misspelled to the point of eccentric unpredictability. Two illustrative examples are *Buda* in lieu of *viuda* and *Salvierderra* for *Salvatierra*. Withal, high frequency, as in words like *frijoles*, *chocolate* and *tortilla*, could not relieve from corrupted writing. Even if the title of the literary piece was thoroughly or partially written in Spanish – as often occurred<sup>26</sup> – the use of hispanicisms was scarce and reduced to anthroponyms (*Ramona*, *Felipe*, *Pablo*, *Juan*, *Yes*, *Señora Moreno*, and the like), toponyms (*San Jacinto*, *Temecula*), and interjections (*carajo!*, *Madre de Dios!* *Carramba!* [sic]), (*ibid.* pp. 214ff) And yet, some words were common within conversational Spanish, like *vaqueros* and *ranchos* (*ibid.* p. 217).

Gradually, the use of hispanicisms begins to augment in the 30's, and continues increasing in the 40's. Marcienne Rocard's *The yoke of the stereotype loosens* contains

<sup>26</sup> These are only some of the examples given by Burciaga (1996): Gertrude Atherton's novel (1890) *Los Cerritos* 'The small hills'; Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona*; Mark Twain's 1865 story *The celebrated jumping frog of Calaveras County*; Joaquín Müller's poems *Songs of the Sierras* and *The tale of the tall alcalde*.

many Spanish words, in the majority of cases used and written in accordance with the Spanish norm<sup>27</sup>. The top figure here is Ernest Hemingway, whose use of Spanish terms is almost perfect. His bullfight-related short stories, like *The Undeclared* (1927), *The capital of the world* (1936) and novels *The sun also rises* (1926) and *Death of the afternoon* (1932), which mainly take place in Spain,<sup>28</sup> abound in Spanish technical bullfight terms. Some instances are: *novillos*, *faena*, *coleta*, *picador*, *patio de caballos*, *cuadrilla*, *barrera*, *corto y derecho*, *suerte* and *tomar*. By now, it will probably not astound the reader that *macho* finds a codifying pen here. Let us use next section to delve deeper into this author.

The idea that Latin American men have some kind of predisposition towards a negative *macho* behavior is omnipresent in the American mind. This can be shown in Martín's explanation of the relationship between *machismo* and street gang culture: "Latino gangs are [a] common example of the interconnection between street gangs and machismo. In fact, machismo is a conspicuous trait of the Latino street." (Martín, 2008:161)

Actually, the *macho*, in the semantic pejorated sense, has numerous forerunners. An early glimpse is found in Algeo (1996:15), who registers *muchacho* in 1591 with the meaning "boy servant in the Spanish army". The Online Etymology Dictionary (Harper, n.d.)<sup>29</sup> attests 'vigilant man' in 1824 and *vigilante* in 1856 and Gooch (1996) explains that *vigilante* was originally a 'watchman,' but became a leitmotiv of violence in the Wild West, "a land plagued by outlaws, in which honest citizens frequently felt the need for protection and formed themselves into bands of self-appointed law officers — *vigilantes*." The *vigilante* is considered a tough *hombre* "what is unclear is whether he is to be considered a tough hombre hero or a tough hombre sadist."<sup>30</sup> (Gooch 1996:246f)

Murray (1996) examines American English slang and finds out that about 10 per cent...

...name or describe people of Hispanic descent (e.g., *bravo*, *chico*, and *dino*), or perhaps even that the vast majority of those terms — at least 40 of the 54 — are derogatory (e.g., *cachupín*, *chicano*<sup>31</sup>, *chico*, *chili*, *cholo*, *Dago*, *enchilada eater*, *filipinyock*, *frijole-guzzler*, *frito*, *Hispano*, *hombre*, *mesican*, *mexie*, *nuyorican*, *paisano*, *pedro*, *pelado*, *p.r.*, *primo*, *rican*, *spic*, and *taco*). " (p. 128)

Additional pejorative sobriquets are the corrupted forms *bandit* and *desperado*, the former referring to Mexican bandits (Rodríguez González 1996b: 87), the latter widely used in American cinema of the forties and fifties referring to a tough *hombre* and showing the following semantic evolution: 'despairing' > 'desperate' > 'desperate criminal' > 'outlaw'. (Gooch 1996:245). Apart from this violent side, the *macho* can be also seen as a meretricious sexual instrument embodying "the prototype of virility associated with the figure of the "Latin lover"." (Rodríguez González 1996b:88)

<sup>27</sup> According to Burciaga (1996:226) Paul Horgan, Harvey Fergusson, William Robert Cox, Jane Barry, Tom Lea, Frank Bonham, Ray Bradbury, Joseph Wambaugh, Frank Waters and Richard Dokey follow the same line.

<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Hemingway has also a short story related to Mexican Americans, *The gambler, the nun, the radio*, published in 1933 in which the use of *amigo* and *mandarlo al carajo* (in lieu of *mándalo al carajo*, hence morphologically and orthographically corrupted) can be classified as Mock Spanish, at least when following the description by Burciaga (1996:223)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=Vigilante> (January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

<sup>30</sup> *Hombre* without italics in the original.

<sup>31</sup> *Chicano* would be the exception, since it has been immersed in a process of semantic amelioration.

Ethnic epithets for Spanish speakers in Anglo American English tend to be tagged with a negative connotation, as described by Murray:

Pejoration has often been recognized as an essential ingredient in American English slang, people from different cultures living in close proximity nearly always create epithetical terms to describe one another, and Americans especially are well-known for their egocentric attitude. (Murray 1996:128)

### 3.3 *The macho personification in literature*

Similar to the *macho* depicted in the Mexican folksongs, i.e. *corridos*, early personifications of the *macho* type mind can be found in early American literature. One of them is authored by O. Henry and is found in his short story *The Caballeros Way*<sup>32</sup> published in the *Heart of the West* (1907), which refers to the character *Cisco Kid*<sup>33</sup>, a murderous outlaw, who “killed for the love of it!”. The following extract (16) contains the first paragraph.

- (16) The Cisco Kid had killed six men in more or less fair scrimmages, had murdered twice as many (mostly Mexicans), and had winged a larger number whom he modestly forbore to count.

O. Henry’s Cisco Kid was “small and dark, [...] a stripling [...] with black, straight hair and a cold, marble face that chilled the noonday.” Whereas, Cisco’s American opponent “seemed to be made of sunshine and blood-red tissue and clear weather. He seemed to illuminate the shadow of the pear when he smiled, as though the sun were rising again.” (Henry, 1907)

“Even though O. Henry’s use of Spanish words is wide, he is also author of perhaps the most derisive literary work on “Mexicanos,” a poem published in *The Rolling Stone*.” Burciaga (1996:219)

- (17) **Tamales**<sup>34</sup>  
 This is the **Mexican**  
 Don José Calderon  
 One of God’s countrymen,  
 Land of the buzzard.  
**Cheap silver dollar**, and  
 Cacti and **murderers**.  
 Why has he left his land  
 Land of the **lazy man**,  
 Land of the **pulque**  
 Land of the **bull fight**,  
**Fleas and revolution**.

José Calderón sells poisoned tamales to Americans in order to take vengeance. He thinks Americans killed one of his ancestors in the Battle of San Jacinto, a decisive

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1725/1725-h/1725-h.htm> (retrieved on Dic. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

<sup>33</sup> In the television series he is esi“ood guy, a hero, with Pancho as his sidekick, reminiscent of Don Quixote’s companion Sancho Panza”. (Burciaga 1996:218)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3815/3815-8.txt> (retrieved on Dic. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020) First print in: 1919 *Rollings Stones*



combat for the independence of Texas. The misspellings in the original poem were copied intactly.

- (18) This is your deep **revenge**.  
You have **greased** all of us,  
**Greased** a whole nation  
With your Tamales,  
Don José Calderon,  
Santos Esperiton,  
Vincente Camillo,  
Quintana de Rios,  
De Rosa y Ribera.

It would take no great stretch of the imagination to discover in the *Tamales*-merchant with the ludicrous and grotesque name *Don José Calderon Santos Esperiton Vincente Camillo Quintana de Rios De Rosa y Ribera* – a murderous, lazy, alcoholic, dirty and poor Mexican<sup>35</sup> – the personification of what would become the *macho*. Don José Calderon is the generic Mexican that has taken revenge of the Americans by greasing them all. The seed for the forthcoming unsavory *macho*-offspring had begun to sprout, and into the bargain a wide gamut of overtones and nuances: *muchacho*, *vigilante*, *bandido*, *spic*, *greaser*, *bravado*, *desperado*, tough *hombre*, but above all *Mexican*.

### 3.4 The background of the origin of the species

The oldest ancestor of *macho* with a male referent in US-English is the American marine in Nicaragua, codified by Carleton Beals in 1928. The codification of the American marine is followed by the pen of Ernest Hemingway the year 1932 incarnated in the Spanish *torero*. These two specimens became extinct. The ground was being prepared for another breed. The anti-Mexican sentiment portrayed in the abundant number of sobriquets prepared the ground for a more successful specimen: the Mexican *macho*.

According to Paredes (2000) the anti-Mexican sentiment of Americans begins in the Colonial period originating first with strong feelings against Spaniards and the power of the Roman Catholic Church. The Spanish were seen as an imperfect civilization because of the Black Legend and the Inquisition. Paredes (2000) reports that early British writers transported these feelings to their image of Mexicans, portraying them as “given to drunkenness, polygamy, and incest.” (p. 48) According to Paredes, US-historians describe Native Americans, but especially Mexicans as brutal, treacherous, vengeful, cruel, savage, and people unable to temper their rage (p. 51). Some concrete illustrations are Thomas Gage's *The English-American*; William Robertson's *History of America*, and Walter Prescott Webb's *The Great Plain*.

Against this background, the Mexican *macho* succeeded. Amid the best proliferating conditions, the Mexican *macho* expanded his referential semantics to the Latino man and was integrated into numerous linguistic habitats. The Mexican man is the *bandito*, the original tough *hombre*, the *macho per se*.

From that moment on *macho* ceased to be only a set of characteristics and became associated with an unsavory type of man, the semantic pejoration was attributed to a ‘race’: The Mexican race.

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<sup>35</sup> These are possible extensions of the following descriptions in the poem: “cheap silver dollar”, “murderer”, “lazy man”, “pulque”, “bull fight”, “fleas” and “revolution”.

Burciaga (1996:215) quotes the Chicano description by John Womack, Jr.: “They were Spaniards if they were prosperous and pale, ‘greasers’, ‘spies’ or Mexicans if they were brown and poor.” This idea is also emphasized by Gooch (1996): “Rather than from Spain, the vogue for the term *machismo* and its spread over the international scene is reputed to stem from Mexico — traditional breeding ground of ‘tough hombres.’” (p. 240, emphasis in the original) Moreover, it is Mexican and Latino-women, who support machismo. Gooch (1996) points out that “Spanish ladies wouldn’t put up with any *machismo* nonsense”. He fosters this idea by paraphrasing and quoting John Cunningham’s description where “he detected in Spanish women a subtle quality of steely resilience, resistance and, indeed, aggressiveness — a special response to male *machismo*: female *machisma*.” (Gooch 1996:241, emphasis in the original) This is a generalization, and as such, subject to error and exceptions. Universal judgments beg for illustration and clarification. It does no favor to the Spanish lady, nor to the Mexican (or Latino-) woman to minimize the level of male violence in Spain (as well as in the USA or any European country), or to take it for granted in Latin America.

### 3.5 Denomination within the bullfighting context

The first codification of *machismo* does not help to identify an earlier denomination of the term *macho*, since it appears in the COHA quite late, in the year 1970, and in 1940 in the *OED*. In the case of English, I looked at the semantic family which the *macho* term seems to have been taken from: bullfighting.

The *macho* item has been described as the linguistic epitome of virility best represented in the image of the *torero* and the bull facing each other in the *arena*. This is probably the borrowing context of the word under scrutiny. Algeo (1996:24) finds out that by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries words related with bullfighting were already in use in American English. Cotton and Sharp (1996:209) posit that in “the folk image of the Hispanic, the bullfight is a national ‘sport’”. These authors even describe Munro Leaf’s peaceful *Ferdinand*, the bull and main character of *The story of Ferdinand* (1936) as “possibly the worst example of a stereotype”, for cowboys call him “amigo”, and he shows a “sanitized *corrida* [where] no blood is spilled” (*ibid.*). Despite being a bull, instead of learning to fight, Ferdinand engages himself with the smell of flowers. The belligerence and aggressiveness of bullfighting are missed.

In relation to the *macho* and *machismo* trajectory in British English and in order to emphasize the growing pejoration, Gooch (1996) makes use of a bullfighting metaphor:

[T]heir frequency seems to increase in direct proportion to the deterioration in the prestige and ultimate credibility of the type and phenomenon they denote. [...] [T]he **linguistic epitome of virility**. However, just as the **bull** — the **animal epitome of virility** — comes charging into the **ring, powerful and full of fighting spirit**, only to be brought low, so the word *macho* has come flooding into English only to see the utter debasement of its once proud meaning. (p. 238, emphasis: ARG)

The relation *macho*-bullfighting is widespread. Burciaga (1996) believes that Hemingway put his oar in this lexical and cultural diffusion. Certainly, one should not overlook the fact that Ernest Hemingway turned into a Nobel Laureate in 1954, causing the *macho*-bullfighting fusion to be doomed to pejoration.

Bullfighting has always been a loathsome subject to a significant number of Anglo-Americans and the number may be increasing in this day and age of animal

rights, Spaniards included. Bullfighting was more known in Hemingway's time than in the present, due in part to Hemingway's short stories and novels. (Burciaga 1996:222)

Grace and Głaz (2010) use the *Vantage Theory* (MacLaury 1995) to detect the semantic core or prototypical meaning of the concept *macho* in three subjects, all of them speakers of Castilian Spanish. The semantic core (fixed coordinate in Grace and Głaz) of *macho* in bullfighting is “male”, and has the adjacent meaning (mobile coordinate in Grace and Głaz) “animal”. In the bullfighting context there was a mirror image in which an “Indomitable-Animal” was facing an “Indomitable/domineering-Man”. The “animal” becomes part of the semantic core and the characteristic “indomitable” becomes the adjacent meaning. The semantic range of *macho* extends and is now not only male, but also an animal, an indomitable animal. As the characteristic “indomitable” enters into the core meaning, the man (seen as a bullfighter in this image), is judged to have indomitable characteristics. Now the *macho* has become a man, an indomitable man. Grace and Głaz believe that after this change, some other characteristics are judged to be similar to the, by this time, core meaning, like “conqueror/womanizer” and “protector/family man,” getting integrated gradually into the core meaning. Between these opposite poles there is another characteristic: the warrior (*guerrero*). Adjacent meanings can become part of the core meaning when speakers judge that they have similarities. This is the path of semantic extensions these authors present: male > male animal > indomitable animal > indomitable / domineering man > conqueror (womanizer) / warrior / protector (family man).

The process of vantage construction refers to the continuous judgement of juxtaposing fixed and mobile coordinates. In the case of borrowings, these could be perceived as “connotations and stylistic markings”, which “at times lead to specialized meanings, giving rise to a [new] distribution of usages<sup>36</sup>” especially if they have “emotive connotations,” Rodríguez González (1996b:65f). This is a dynamic process. Meaning extension occurs when mobile coordinates are judged as similar to the fix coordinates because they become fixed coordinates, or orientating characteristics, in the meaning construction process of subsequent judgements, cf. Głaz and Allan (2010). This denotational and connotational interplay is clearly visible in the semantic evolution of the *macho* item, both in Mexican Spanish, and in US-English.

#### 4. Conclusions

The linguistic exploration presented here supports the idea that the word *macho* is part of the Mock Spanish repertoire in the US-English discourse. It is especially the semantic pejoration in the form of the extension ‘male animal’ > ‘animal-like man’ which provides the word *macho* with its Mock Spanish characteristics. Yet, the linguistic data do not support the idea that the semantic pejoration was a US-American creation. This survey rather confirms the anthropological assumption that the semantic pejoration of the *macho* item was a bilateral US-Mexican contribution. In this regard, the *macho* item shows atypicality. A typical Mock Spanish item is negatively connoted in English, but maintains its neutral or positive connotation in Spanish, for example *muchacho*, *vigilante*, *amigo*, *adios*, *siesta*, etc. The following chart summarizes the results.

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<sup>36</sup> Rodríguez González (1996b:66) gives the example of the integration of *conquistador* into English, which differs from conqueror in present-day English usage. *Conquistador* has undergone a restriction of meaning, referring now either to “a Spanish conqueror in America,” or to a “conqueror of the heart” or some kind of Latin lover in a pejorative sense.

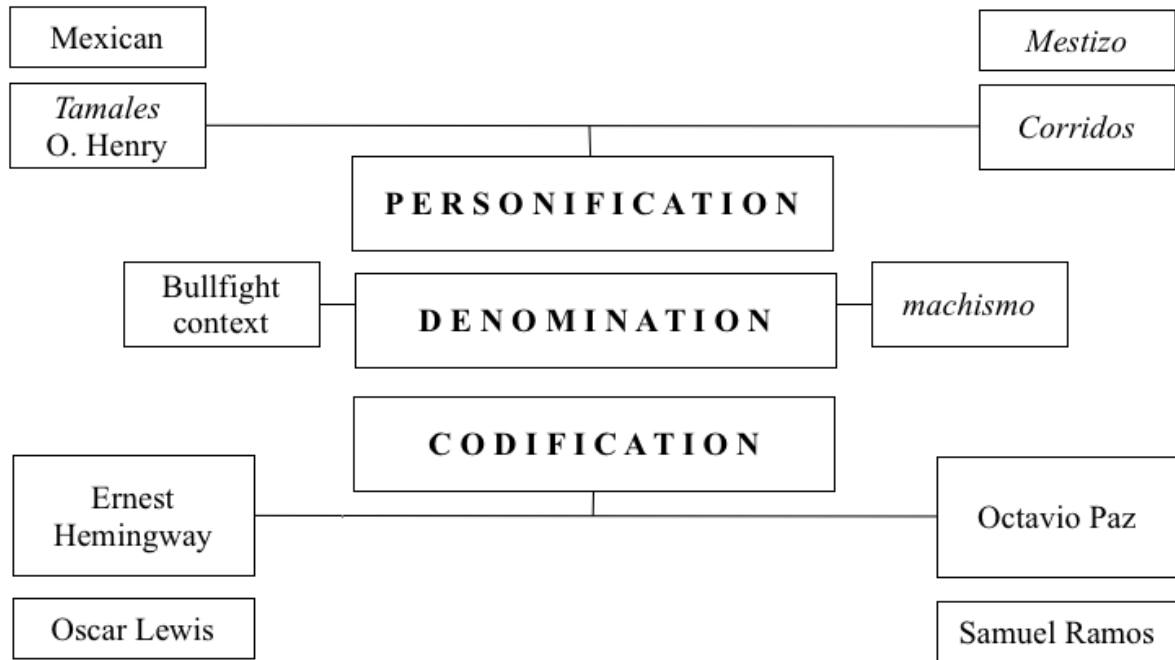


Figure 5. Itinerary of the semantic pejoration of a sobriquet to designate Mexican men.

Perhaps the data do not show an exact mirror image, as it appears in the chart, but strong parallelism. The semantic pejoration of the *macho* item in US-English and Mexican Spanish was fostered by the stereotypical image of an ethnic group. This is the personification. In American English we find a plethora of negative connoted sobriquets to refer to Mexicans (*muchacho*, *vigilante*, *bandido*, *spic*, *greaser*, *bravado*, *desperado*, tough *hombre*, etc.). In a similar fashion, Mexican Spanish results to be well endowed with derogatory epithets to refer to a less privileged group of Mexicans (*indio*, *mestizo*, *pelado*, etc.). For both languages I have presented the personification of this stereotypical image in literature (*Tamales* by O. Henry) for US-English, and in folk songs (*corridos*), for Mexican Spanish.

The *macho* item resulted to be a propitious codification of the stereotypical image of these two (socio)linguistic groups. In the year 1932, Ernest Hemingway becomes an important codifying pen of the *macho* item with a human referent in the American literature. Some years later, in 1950, Octavio Paz uses this word in his literary creation as well. The former referring to his admired *torero*, the latter to describe and devalue Mexican men. The latter triumphed.

The success of Octavio Paz' *macho* was complemented by a group of academics, being the main figures the American anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1914-1970) and the Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos (1897-1959). There were more participating pens, though. Machillot (2013:141) further includes in this *machismo*-dialogue on the Mexican side Vicente T. Mendoza (1894-1964) and Aniceto Aramoni (1916-2012), and on the American Erich Fromm (1900-1980), George M. Foster (1913-2006), and Américo Paredes (1915-1999).

In conclusion, the semantic pejoration of the *macho* item was the result of a context of discrimination. In Mexico, a wealthy group of dark-skinned Mexicans began discriminating against another group of also dark-skinned Mexicans- only less favored, perhaps because they were more representative of the indigenous population. In the same vein, another group of Americans embracing the ideology of the manifest destiny saw their own interpretation of non-white population as being inferior. This has been called the anti-Mexican sentiment.

The linguistic data show that the semantic pejoration of the *macho* term occurred within a cooperation between both, Mexican and American intellectuals, motivated both by a stereotypical image that they wanted to portray.

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